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Lawmakers Introduce Law on 'Foreign Agent' Media

By The Moscow Times

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Federal lawmakers introduced a bill to the State Duma on Friday that would force foreign-funded media to register as "foreign agents," adding to a raft of bills that critics say is aimed at cracking down on dissent.

The law would complement another piece of legislation that forces non-governmental organizations that engage in "political activities" and receive money from abroad to register themselves using the same term.

"Media will be considered as such if they receive money or property greater than 50 percent of revenues from foreign governments and their organs, international and foreign organizations as well as foreign citizens and people without citizenship," Interfax reported.

It was not clear how widely the new rules would be applied, and whether they would apply to Russian media with foreign funding or all foreign media organizations. Russian officials

were not immediately available for comment.

The law would likely consolidate the predominance of Kremlin-friendly state-owned media, which already hold a near monopoly over national television.

The Kremlin, which denies orchestrating a clampdown on dissent, has said the NGO law is needed to tighten control over foreign-funded organizations operating in Russia to prevent them from gathering intelligence for other governments.

Following the biggest protests against his nearly 13-year long rule, President Vladimir Putin has accused foreign governments including the United States of meddling in domestic politics.

Kremlin human rights council head Mikhail Fedotov said the media law threatened to isolate Russia.

"These deputies are advocating an iron curtain," Fedotov said, according to Interfax.

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